

April 1961

Pathway to the Mind



Recording for the Blind, Inc.

121 EAST 58TH STREET

NEW YORK 22, N.Y.

ANNUAL REPORT

1960

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On May 10, 1960, at the White House, President Eisenhower presented scholastic achievement awards to three blind students selected by Recording for the Blind for the honor. With the President, left to right, are : Robert E. Bastien, now a practicing attorney in DuQuoin, Illinois; Myrna Schmidt, currently a teacher at the Shenandoah Central High School, Schenectady, New York; and Jack S. Middleton, a graduate of Purdue University in Indiana.

Pathway to the Mind

Leaders among the blind have made an effort in recent years to alter the public stereotype of "the blind man with a cup"—the dependent person who must live under sheltered conditions—and to replace it with the concept of a person able to hold his own in society, asking for no favors. Neither portrait is entirely accurate. The blind are not a kind of people, but all kinds of people. They are intellectual or non-intellectual, industrious or indolent, ambitious or apathetic, neurotic or stable, in a proportion similar to that of people with sight.

Recording for the Blind doesn't serve all of them. Its program is only of interest to those who have the ability and determination to get an education, to train themselves to advance in their professions or occupations. The blind do not use our recordings for entertainment; they use them for work.

Thus, Recording for the Blind has only one objective—to help blind people to become self-supporting and productive members of their communities. In 1960, in pursuit of this end, we distributed 8,814 recorded educational books to some 2,000 blind students of all ages. We produced during the year 1,074 new titles, in a total of 6,398 copies. All of these were done at the specific request of the blind person or, sometimes, of his instructor.

What kind of books were they, and who asked for them?

We recorded *New Hope For Arthritic Sufferers* for a blind physical therapist and masseur; we recorded *The Boy Scout Handbook*; we recorded *General Principles of Criminal Law* for a blind Police Court magistrate and lawyer in Oregon; *Readings in Russian History* for a blind student at the University of Virginia; 18 Cornell Extension Bulletins on *Dairy Cattle* for a blind farmer in upstate New York; *Kinetic Thermo-Organics in Biochemistry*, for a blind professor at the University of Miami, etc. Every field of study was represented in this year's collection.

Production

Since this work began ten years ago, the expansion has been remarkable. In the past three years the figures are as follows:

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1958</u>
Titles Produced	1,074	945	530
Total, incl. Copies	6,398	7,163	2,282
Discs Recorded	161,790	147,748	48,810
Books Distributed	8,814	6,407	3,234

As indicated, the number of discs embossed last year averaged over 3,000 a week, and the embossing room at Headquarters operated twelve hours a day, six days a week. Even with this maximum effort, we were not able to keep up with the demand, and the potential need for these books is far greater than the present output.

Better Readers

Thus, while we are proud of this expansion, we are never satisfied with the service, and we strive at all times to make it better. We are, for example, continually improving the quality of our recordings. This begins with the reader. Our books are recorded originally on tape by some 1,500 volunteer readers at our fourteen Units. All these must take reading tests, which are judged by an Evaluation Committee in our New York office. We test between 1,500 and 2,000 new readers a year and reject more than half of them. Those who are accepted are under continual review, and an RFB reader has to maintain a high standard of performance.

This would not be so difficult if only "literary" books were involved; but most of our books are textbooks, some of them are exceedingly difficult to read, and many of them require specialists in their fields. Good readers who are also specialists are not so easy to find.



A volunteer reader records one of the great classics on tape in the monitored recording program. All readers pass special tests and have been trained in recording procedures.

But the quality of the reading must also be matched by the recording technique. The commercial method of pressing a disc from a metal master turns out a recording of excellent quality, but this method is only practicable where hundreds or preferably thousands of copies are being made. We make an average of only six copies of a textbook, and the commercial method here would be prohibitively expensive. So we use a special technique called embossing by which the tape is transcribed directly to a relatively hard 7-inch disc. This gives an adequate recording, but is inferior to the commercial product.

New Embossing Equipment

Fortunately, this year we are installing new equipment which should improve the embossing process. In our embossing room we have 96 turntables, on which the discs are cut, and 20 tape-players. Most of the turntables were given to us second-hand four years ago, and all the equipment has been used seventy-two hours a week, for the past two and a half years. It was not built for this kind of service, and we have had a continual maintenance problem.

Now we have received a grant of \$20,000 from the Richard King Mellon Foundation and \$5,980 from the Gustavus and Louise Pfeiffer Research Foundation to replace this outworn equipment with 96 new cutting tables of professional quality and 20 new tape-players. At the same time we have successfully concluded a research project in doubling the speed of transcribing the tape onto discs. With the new equipment we shall not only get better discs, but we shall be able to record them at twice the speed—embossing them at $33\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, to be played back at our regular speed of $16\frac{2}{3}$ rpm. This will enable us to increase our output substantially.



Embossing Room at RFB's New York Headquarters showing equipment that will be replaced with 96 new cutting tables of professional quality and 20 new tape-players. Here the discs are embossed directly from the recorded tapes. A tape is connected with as many turntables as there are to be copies. The maximum number that we can make is 36.

Students of All Ages

Since Recording for the Blind began ten years ago as a project to enable blind G.I.'s to go to college, we have been primarily interested in blind students of college age, and we are currently serving about 900 of them. We are also serving an equal number of blind adults in vocational or professional training. One special accomplishment here is the complete recording of the eight years' discussion program of the Great Books Foundation.

With respect to blind children at the grade school level, we are recording as many books as our facilities permit. We now have approximately 350 titles in this category. In cooperation with the Connecticut State Board of Education of the Blind, we are recording all the textbooks used by the blind in Connecticut's public schools. Our books are normally free on loan, and since, in this case, the State wishes to keep the books, we make a charge amounting to fifty cents a disc. In addition, we are serving schools in other states on our regular loan basis. Two comments here may be of interest. One is from the State Board of Education in Sacramento, California, as follows:

"We would like to express our appreciation for the fine transcription service your organization is providing for visually handicapped students throughout the State. Because our bureau is serving as a clearing house for materials, we have received many words of thanks and praise from students using your textbook recordings."

The other is from the Bureau of Visually Handicapped in New York City:

"I should like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your very beneficial resources in the area of recording textbooks for blind students attending various public schools in the City of New York."



A blind student takes notes in braille while listening to a recording of a textbook provided by Recording for the Blind. The new RFB catalogue will list over 3,000 books that are currently available. Most of these books were recorded at the specific request of the blind user.

Central Library

A major improvement in our service this year is the setting up of our Central Library in space generously given us by the New York Public Library on the third floor of its Harlem branch, at 9 West 124th Street, New York City. Hitherto our books have been deposited in partial collections in some ten regional libraries serving the blind. We are very grateful for the cooperation of these libraries and are aware that, as our production has increased, this task has become increasingly burdensome for them.

With our own Central Library, we expect to process in 24 hours an order for a book that would have taken three to twelve days under the previous system. Also, we shall be able to check the condition of these recordings more carefully as they come back from one student to await the call from another. By the end of this year we should have about 3,500 recorded educational books in a total of some 30,000 copies in this Library—a collection unique in the world.

Research in the Uses of Recorded Material

Last year the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare awarded us a grant of \$21,400 to study, through personal interview, how blind students use our recordings, what they like about them and what they don't like about them, and what suggestions they make for their improvement. The survey involves between 300 and 400 interviews based on an hour-long questionnaire, prepared and supervised by Dr. Martin Haskell as investigator for the project. This will be completed on June 30.

The results should be of great value in improving this service to the blind, and the incidental information obtained in connection with the questionnaire will be of general interest. The findings will be published in a report.



A major improvement in our service is the setting up of a Central Library, shown above, for all of our recorded books—a total of some 30,000 copies. Our books had previously been deposited in partial collections in some ten regional libraries serving the blind. By the end of 1961 all these books will be at one location.

Research in a System of Tape-Recorded Books

It is our belief that the future of recorded communication is in the slow-speed, long-playing cartridge tape which doesn't have to be threaded and is never touched by hand. Together with the Library of Congress we are conducting a research project at CBS Laboratories on a system of such tape-recorded books, which by the end of the year should produce the following two results:

1) Five prototype tape-players using the cartridge tape and specially designed for the blind—light in weight, small in size, low in cost and easy to operate. For this we received from the Council on Library Resources \$12,000 and from Lilly Endowment, Inc. a balance of \$8,000 left over from a previous grant;

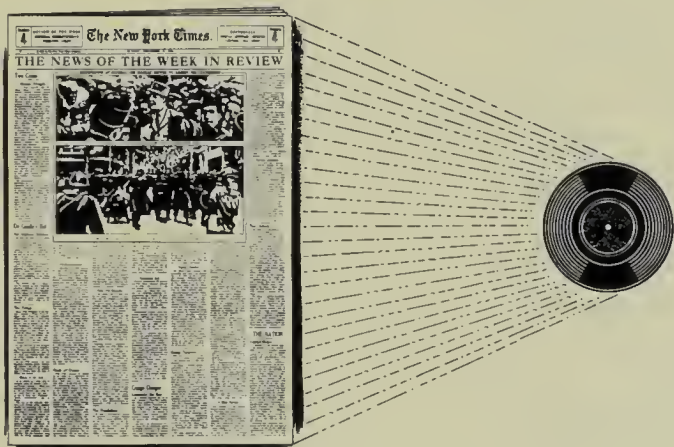
2) The development of a high speed tape-duplicator, so that a cartridge of eight or nine hours of reading can be duplicated in a few minutes. For this the Library of Congress has received a grant of \$50,000 from the Council on Library Resources.

If successful, this development will give us a recorded book of high quality which will not deteriorate in use as the discs now inevitably do, and which will be lower in cost. Since this could involve a radical change both in the recorded book, and in the Talking Book machine, which the Library of Congress provides free to the blind, the results will have to be very carefully evaluated.

"The News of the Week in Review"

Again with the cooperation and financial help of The New York Times, we are recording for the second year "The News of the Week in Review" from the Sunday edition of that paper. We get this excellent news summary on one 7-inch disc, and since we have a circulation of around 1,000, we can afford to have this disc pressed in the commercial manner. We make a small charge for this service—\$5 to blind students and \$10 to blind adults for 52 issues. This pays for about a fifth of the cost, and the balance is generously contributed by the New York Times Foundation, the Henrietta and Stuard Hirschmann Foundation, the William J. Wollman Foundation, and others.

Ten volunteer readers have qualified for the recording, and the reading has been highly praised by the subscribers, whose letters also testify eloquently to the value of this service. In addition to the United States distribution, this recording is airmailed to subscribers in Europe, South America and Asia.



Fund-Raising

All these operations have required a very active fund-raising campaign, and we are pleased to report that our contributors now number somewhere around 24,000 as against 3,500 three and a half years ago. We are also very grateful for the fact that more Foundations have become aware of the importance of this program. The time and effort that fund-raising requires are not always appreciated either inside or outside an organization — but our expanded service to blind students has only been made possible by our greater financial strength.

Elsewhere in this report there is a consolidated statement of income and expenditures which shows that we had a total income for both our regular program and for special projects of \$409,787 last year, as against total expenditures of \$311,615, leaving us a balance of \$98,172. Against this balance we have commitments of \$61,000 to complete certain special projects; and the surplus, added to the balance at the end of 1959, will enable us to draw closer to our financial objective, which is that of obtaining a modest reserve equal to something like one year's income, as a support against possible future contingencies and unexpected requirements.

It should be noted that our volunteers make a vital contribution to this program which, if we attempted to evaluate it on the most conservative monetary basis, would certainly be worth a quarter of a million dollars. We could hardly continue to operate without the unpaid labors of these intelligent, skillful and dedicated people. In this connection, we made an important addition to our staff this year in the person of a field representative, serving without salary, but with an expense account, who will act as a liaison between Headquarters in New York and the 14 volunteer Units across the country.

A Personal Service

In closing I would like to say that, despite our continuing growth, we are determined not to lose the personal character of our service, which we think means so much to our students, be they young or old. A blind person who decides to undertake a college education, or a blind adult who makes an effort to move ahead in his vocation or profession faces a challenge which people with sight can only dimly understand. We take a great interest in how they meet this challenge; we want to know of their successes and failures; we want them to be aware of our eagerness to help.

Therefore, although in handling the thousands of letters we receive from students we may have to make greater use of forms for reasons of economy, we hope to keep most of this correspondence personal, as of value to both the students and ourselves. One quotation — from the wife of a blind professor — should suffice on this point:

"May I take this opportunity to thank you once more for the marvelous help you give to the blind; as for me, the relationship with all of you, the way you answer the requests, the promptitude, the wording, the implied desire to be of help, all this I write down as an unforgettable experience."

To the chairmen of our fourteen Units who have conducted so well a volunteer operation that is exceedingly difficult and time-consuming; to the 2,000 other volunteers who have recorded books or prepared braille labels or done other clerical jobs; to the Board for its extraordinary interest in all this work; and to the staff at our Headquarters, I wish to express my thanks for what has been a productive year.

Barbara Payne
President

MARCH, 1961

RECORDING FOR THE BLIND, INC.

Statement of Income Collected and -Expenditures in 1960 — National Headquarters -

OPERATING INCOME

Contributions from Foundations, Individuals, and Business Corporations	\$316,769.85
Benefit Performances	16,868.70
Investment Income	530.05
State of Connecticut	685.00
<i>Total Operating Income</i>	<i>\$334,853.60</i>

INCOME FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

Recording "The News of the Week In Review"	12,893.95
U.S. Office of Vocational Rehabilitation — Research in Uses of Recorded Material	21,400.00
Research in Tape Recorded Books	12,000.00
New Equipment in Embossing Room	20,000.00
Investment Income	1,048.08
Legacies	7,591.62
<i>Total Income for Special Projects</i>	<i>74,933.65</i>
GRAND TOTAL INCOME	\$409,787.25

OPERATING EXPENDITURES

Administration	44,164.51
Production	74,999.67
Unit Coordination, Student Correspondence & Central Library	31,555.20
Public Information	24,906.01
Public Support	77,799.26
<i>Total Operating Expenditures</i>	<i>253,424.65</i>

EXPENDITURES FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

Recording "The News of the Week in Review"	35,054.93
8½ rpm Research—CBS Laboratories	14,370.00
Research in Uses of Recorded Material — U.S. Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	8,765.29
<i>Total Expenditures for Special Projects</i>	<i>58,190.22</i>
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$311,614.87
<i>Excess of Income over Expenditures</i>	<i>\$ 98,172.38</i>
Amount added to Special Projects Fund	\$ 16,743.43
Amount added to Operating Fund	81,428.95

To the Board of Directors of
Recording for the Blind, Incorporated

We have examined the accompanying statement of income collected and expenses disbursed of National Headquarters of Recording for the Blind, Incorporated for the year ended December 31, 1960. We have also examined the statement of assets, liabilities and fund balance of National Headquarters of the organization and the related statement of income collected and expenses disbursed and changes in fund balances for the year. Financial statements of Recording Units of Recording for the Blind, Incorporated were examined by other independent accountants. Our report to the board of directors of the organization, dated March 6, 1961, on the statements of assets, liabilities and fund balances of Recording for the Blind, Incorporated at December 31, 1960 resulting from the cash transactions, and the income collected, expenses disbursed and changes in fund balances for the year may be examined at the office of the organization. Our examination was made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, and accordingly included such tests of the accounting records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. It was impracticable for us to extend our examination of contributions received from foundations and the general public beyond accounting for amounts so recorded.

In our opinion, the accompanying statement presents fairly the income collected and expenses disbursed of National Headquarters of Recording for the Blind, Incorporated for the year ended December 31, 1960 and is presented on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

PRICE WATERHOUSE & CO.

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National Headquarters

121 East 58th Street
New York 22, New York

Recording Units

Recording for the Blind has Units in the following 14 cities, which are supported entirely by local contributions:

ATHENS, Georgia

Capt. John Allen Edwards, Chairman
Ga. Center for Continuing Education
University of Georgia

BERKSHIRE COUNTY, Mass.

Mrs. John M. Deely, Jr., Chairman
Lenox Library
Lenox, Massachusetts

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Virginia

Mrs. Ralph Miller, Chairman
1601 University Avenue

CHICAGO, Illinois

Mrs. Rosecrans Baldwin, Chairman
600 South Michigan Ave., Room 910

DENVER, Colorado

Mrs. Thomas B. Knowles, Chairman
Henry White Warren Branch Library
3354 High Street

DETROIT, Michigan

Mr. Godfrey Strelinger, Chairman
Kresge Science Library
5250 Second Boulevard

LOS ANGELES, California

Mrs. W. West Hunt, Chairman
Fremont Branch, L. A. Public Library
6121 Melrose Avenue

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky

Mrs. Charles H.R. Lyon, Chairman
Mrs. Robert M. Drennan, Co-Chairman
Masonic Home

GREATER MIAMI, Florida

Mrs. Mae Knight Clark, Chairman
University of Miami, Box 8014
Coral Gables

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut

Mrs. Erdman Harris, Chairman
New Haven Public Library
133 Elm Street

NEW YORK, New York

Mrs. Ross B. Macdonald, Co-Chairman
Mrs. John F. Preston, Co-Chairman
112 East 96th Street

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Mrs. W. W. Grigorieff, Chairman
Post Office Box 531

PHOENIX, Arizona

Mrs. Denison Kitchel, Chairman
Phoenix Public Library
Civic Center

PRINCETON, New Jersey

Mrs. Ralph A. Rotnem, Chairman
100 Stockton Street

Recording for the Blind, Inc. has no endowment. Its greatest need is funds for the future. Although it recorded over 6300 educational books in 1960, this production met only a small part of the potential demand. You can help to provide for future years by including this service in your will.


Form of Bequest

I give and bequeath to Recording for the Blind, Inc., New York, New York, the sum of \$.....

Name.....

Address.....

Gifts to Recording for the Blind, Inc. are exempt from estate and income taxes.



*John Smith
City College
Anywhere, U.S.A*

**FREE MAIL
FOR THE BLIND**